

INTRO

- What comes to your mind when you hear the words *Greece* or *Greek*?

READ

Read Acts 17:16-34

REFLECT

Due to a commotion in Berea, Paul has to flee to Athens. While waiting for his friends there, his spirit is stirred by the idolatry of the Athenian people. He begins to talk to people in the marketplace, but soon they take him to the Areopagus so that they could deliberate about these new ideas he was spreading.

There Paul finds a very different audience than what he was accustomed to. Unlike the Jews he encountered at the synagogues, these Athenians didn't know the Scriptures or consider them to be the word of God. The way Paul addresses them is in itself a great lesson for us as we try to convey the gospel in a way that is relevant to a culture strange to it.

1. Be attentive to culture

First of all, Paul was certainly aware of what Greek culture was like. So much so that he is able to quote by heart the words of two different Greek poems. He shows us that in order for us to make the gospel understood, we may need some level of discernment of what *is* the culture we are trying to reach. We need to be engaged enough to know what it is like, while remaining different enough so that we can critique it.

Qu: What do you think is the value in knowing well the culture around us? How can we learn about this culture without conforming to it?

2. Recognize seeds of truth

Paul doesn't only critique the culture, but finds in it certain "seeds of truth". Even in their pagan beliefs, there were hints of truth in the Athenian devotion to their gods, albeit distorted and misplaced. Paul uses that as his springboard to bring the Athenians to a fuller knowledge of the truth in Jesus Christ.

Qu: Have you ever encountered these "seeds of truth" when talking to someone that knew nothing about Jesus? How can that be a springboard to the Gospel?

3. Challenge the idols of the age

Finally, Paul presses the Athenians where their beliefs made no sense. He started where they were at, but he wasn't going to leave them there. Paul argues that one couldn't believe that a god who made the heavens and the earth would live inside human temples and be served by human hands. The God of creation is not like that, and He revealed himself in Jesus Christ, proven by the fact that he rose from the dead.

Likewise, we are called to press our culture where it doesn't make sense, and where its promises are empty. We must deconstruct what is false in our age so that the light of Jesus Christ can shine in the darkness.

Qu: How can we deconstruct the beliefs of others with grace and truth so that they will know Christ as the only one that can satisfy their souls?

RESPOND & PRAY

UNSTOPPABLE S3

Relevant

- What encouraged/challenged you the most from this discussion?
- Spend time praying for one another and those you know who need to hear the good news of salvation.